ADHD SCREENING

The Task Starter Checklist

Simple ways to get unstuck and actually begin

A free resource from adhd-screening.co.uk

Starting a task is often harder than actually doing it. With ADHD, the gap between deciding to do something and physically beginning it can feel enormous — not because the task itself is hard, but because starting requires a kind of activation that doesn't always arrive on cue.

The strategies below are about closing that gap, not about trying harder. You don't need all seven — pick two or three and try them on the next task you're avoiding.

1. Make the first step impossibly small

Break the task down until the very first action takes under two minutes — “open the laptop” rather than “write the report.” A task that feels too big to start usually isn't actually that large; it's just been described as one single, overwhelming step.

2. Commit to five minutes, not the whole task

Tell yourself you only have to do it for five minutes, then you're allowed to stop. Starting is almost always the hardest part — once you're moving, continuing is far easier than the decision to begin was.

3. Remove the friction before you need to start

Open the document, lay out the tools, or clear the desk the moment before you plan to begin — not when you're already trying to start. Every extra click or search between “I should start” and actually starting is a chance to get derailed.

4. Say out loud exactly what “done” looks like

A vague task (“sort out my emails”) is much easier to avoid than a specific one (“reply to the three emails flagged in my inbox”). Write the finish line down before you start, not just the task name. (There's a template for this on the last page.)

5. Borrow someone else's presence

Tasks that feel impossible alone often become manageable with someone else quietly working nearby, in person or on a video call. This is sometimes called body doubling, and it's one of the few consistently reported ADHD-specific strategies worth naming directly.

6. Pair the task with a time, not a feeling

“When I finish lunch, I'll do this” works far better than “I'll do this when I feel ready,” because the feeling of readiness for an unwanted task often never reliably arrives. Attach the task to a fixed point in your day instead.

7. Started badly is still started

A messy, imperfect first attempt beats a perfect plan you never begin. If you've started, you're already past the hardest part — momentum, not motivation, tends to carry the rest.

A closing thought

If task starting is a struggle most days — not just with chores you'd rather avoid, but with things you actually want to do — that's worth taking seriously, not just working around.

Our free, confidential ADHD screening takes about ten minutes and might help make sense of why. It isn't a diagnosis — just a starting point.

Start your free screening at adhd-screening.co.uk

This guide offers general, practical strategies and isn't medical advice or a substitute for a professional assessment.

Your Task Starter Checklist

Before you start your next avoided task, work through this once — then keep it by your desk for the next one. Two examples are filled in to show the idea.

[x] Picked one task and wrote exactly what “done” looks like

example — replace with your own

[x] Set a timer for 5 minutes and started

example — replace with your own

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